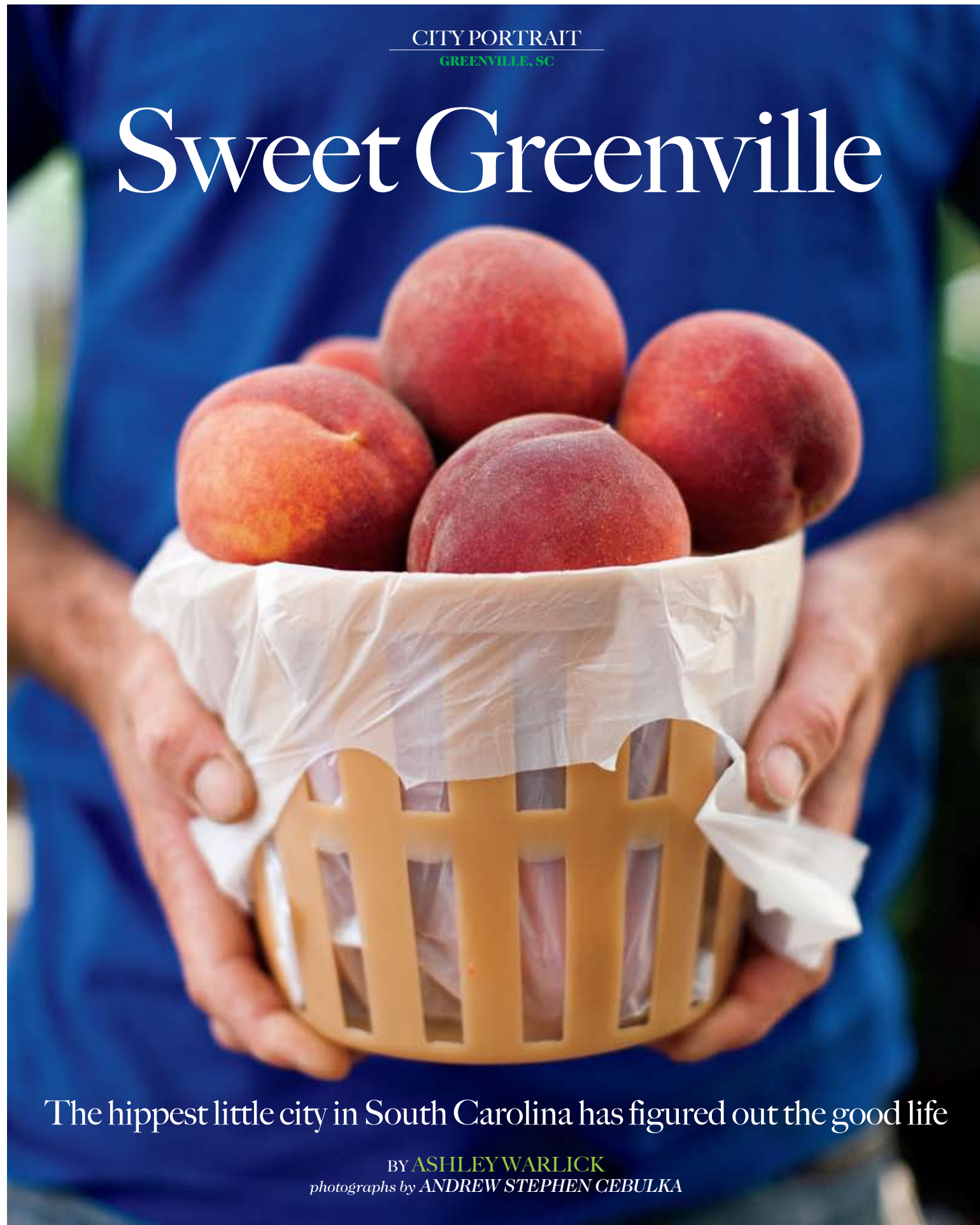


Carolina Pride
Potter and designer
Lily Wikoff. Opposite:
Locally grown peaches
at the Saturday Market.



CITY PORTRAIT
GREENVILLE, SC

Sweet Greenville



The hippest little city in South Carolina has figured out the good life

BY **ASHLEY WARLICK**
photographs by **ANDREW STEPHEN CEBULKA**

THE BIG PICTURE

GREENVILLE, SC

SAY YOU MARRY YOUR FIRST BOYFRIEND.

You know about boys before ~~that~~, the way you know about internal combustion engines: You can recognize one when you see it, and you have expectations it will take you somewhere. A boy ought to spin you around, buy you dinner, bring you flowers every once in a while. Say you meet a boy, and he does all that, and you go ahead and get married. You're young. It's not like you can say you know what you're doing, but nobody's going to tell you otherwise either. You've got a plan.

This is my first real hometown. Not somewhere I was born, but somewhere I picked myself. We moved to Greenville almost twelve years ago for the reasons people move places. There was a job at Furman University in a campus like a park, with a student body as nice and earnest as a professor's dream. My brother lived here, finishing a degree at Clemson. Our daughter was young, I wanted to be near family again, and coming off a long run in Pennsylvania, I wanted to be back in the South, where I grew up.

It seemed like a nice town, rich in dogwoods and azaleas, in shade. A Southern town ought to have a lot of azaleas, a good barbecue joint with a Sunday church crowd, and some dead heroes in the cemeteries whom people still claim as their own. We bought a house just off the end of Main Street from a man who said the iron insets in the gates on the white picket fence had come from his family's side of the Faulkner clan, and when I met his mother, I could ask. It was just what we were looking for.

When we moved in, our neighbors Lamar and Bob brought us a bottle of wine and a card printed with a poem by the late South Carolina poet laureate Bennie Lee Sinclair, because they had heard I was a writer. Lamar was in set design; Bob mostly liked to watch my brother work on his car in our driveway. This, not far from the ultraconservative shadow of Bob Jones University. We could spot the girls in the grocery store with their skirts past their knees, and the boys buying flowers every Friday, even though there was no dating allowed on campus. It seemed sweetly confused, like whatever's going on over there was as private as what's going on in my neighborhood. I liked the idea, even back then, that this town had room enough for both.

Just off the tail of the Appalachian Mountains, halfway between Charlotte and Atlanta, Greenville is a place that's thought very carefully about itself and how it wants to grow. In the past twelve years, the city has reimagined the whole idea of downtown, of Main Street. It's not a throwback or a theme park; it's not quaint or cute. It's just where we all want to go whenever we have the chance.

At its heart is a bridge. It's a suspension bridge like the sail of a ship

across the Reedy River at the falls, the river that's always churned through here, that used to turn colors according to what fabric was being dyed in the mills along its banks. Now we race rubber ducks on it, we splash in it, we run our dogs alongside and our bikes and our baby strollers. We collect around it. It's the center.

And when we head downtown to Falls Park for a weekend afternoon in summer, it always seems like there's something going on, but it's really just people enjoying living here. They drive in from the sprawl, the other country off Woodruff Road and its big-box stores, its soccer fields and cuts of planned developments with horse words on the street signs. They walk over from the Hampton Pinckney neighborhood with its Victorians, or the bungalows they're renovating over on the west side, with their hair streaked the colors of bird feathers, their chunky glasses, and their cool. A trolley runs a loop down Main to Fluor Field, our little Fenway, past our big green monster, and over to the art museums and the library; just put your hand up when you see it coming and it stops for you.

In the crowd, we hear other languages: French and German, Spanish from South America and Mexico, alongside the deep old-money tones that have always been made here, the sounds from the country, from the mountains. Upstate South Carolina is now home to more international investment per capita than any other region in the United States, including plants for BMW and Michelin. Pretty quickly, this small city begins to feel like a big place.

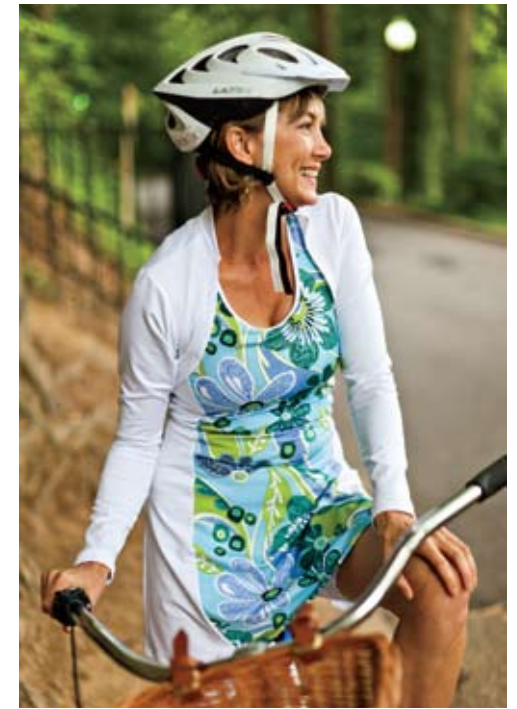
It eats like a big place, too. Tandoori and tacos, falafel and mjadra—we eat at the Pita House so often I've determined what percentage of my children's bodies are Lebanese—Colombian patacones and arepas at Sacha's with thick fruit milkshakes, goat curry at Jamaica Twist. The Bavarian Pretzel Factory makes its own Weisswurst every morning. You can find monkfish liver at Sushi Koji and absinthe at the Trappe Door, with water dripped from a tap through a sugar cube to cloud in your glass. And wherever we're eating, there are people from that country eating, too.

But my favorite restaurant in the world is American Grocery. Joe Clarke sources as much of his menu as he can from local farmers, what's grown and raised right here. The first time I ever ate beef tongue was at his table; the first time I ever barged into a restaurant kitchen was to thank him. The Saturday Market

A Southern town ought to have a lot of azaleas, a good barbecue joint with a Sunday church crowd, and some dead heroes in the cemeteries whom people still claim as their own

draws these same farmers to sell their produce from May through October, melons and peaches and beans, heirloom tomatoes with names like Cherokee Purple, after the first people to call this place home.

And like a good Southern town, we keep a hand on the past. The paths along the Reedy connect to the greater Swamp Rabbit trail, almost fourteen miles of reclaimed railroad now connecting Greenville to Travelers Rest. The old Markley Carriage Paint Factory, which became the Duke's mayonnaise factory, now the Wyche Pavilion, stands on the banks near the Peace Center. Its open arches are hung with flowers and paper globes for this eve-



ning's wedding. Everything belongs to something else, something with deeper roots, flourishing in unexpected new directions.

Above the park, there's the campus of the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. High school students from all over the state, dancers and musicians, actors and artists and writers, live and work here, apprenticed to artists in their field—evil genius George Singleton publishes a book almost once a year, and he teaches his students as though they might one day do the same. These kids win national awards for their portfolios and become Presidential Scholars. They go to any college they want to go to, and this is where it starts.

Bridge to Somewhere
Clockwise from top left: The Liberty Bridge across the Reedy River; biking at Falls Park; a friendly wave on Main Street; inside the Peace Center; the Saturday Market.

We have two children now, and a white house with a garden that sometimes blooms. I cut peonies from my own yard for our table. We walk our son to school down our street. I love this place because I've loved it so long, and also because it keeps changing. It's a loop I'm glad to travel, downtown on the trolley and back, across the bridge and back, each time noticing something new. Sometimes, you luck out the first time, and you get to stay forever.

The Green Life

Indoors and out, by foot or by bike, Greenville is full of surprises
by ELIZABETH HUTCHISON

Eat

American Grocery Restaurant

Ditching big-city careers in Hollywood and the Big Apple, Joe and Darlene Clarke returned home to South Carolina to open this cozy restaurant, where Joe helms the kitchen and Darlene runs the wine program. The menu changes weekly (even daily), depending on what the Clarks' army of farmers bring in, but rabbit and maple-glazed pork belly are sure bets and nearly always on hand. Don't miss the Pig on the Porch, a craft cocktail made with house-infused bacon bourbon and Blenheim ginger ale and garnished with a homemade pork rind. **732 S. Main St.; americangr.com**

The Bohemian

After a Saturday night on the town, the Bohemian, in Greenville's hip North Main neighborhood, is a favorite for its leisurely Sunday brunch. The food is hearty, from hand-battered French toast made with fresh ciabatta to the greasy-good Trucker's Special (with made-from-scratch biscuits and gravy). The build-your-own Bloody Mary bar is the best hangover balm in town. **2B W. Stone Ave.; thebohemiancafe.com**

The Lazy Goat

Weather permitting, it's a good bet the riverfront patio at this Mediterranean-style eatery will be packed. But not to worry: Chef Vicky Moore's tapas are just as enjoyable inside. House specialties include Moroccan lamb, pistachio-dusted fried goat cheese, truffled *pommes*

frites with chipotle ketchup, and superb sangria. **170 River Place; thelazygoat.typepad.com**

OJ's Diner

The lunch line of regulars clues you in that this soul-food institution isn't your average meat-and-three. The fried chicken is hard to top, but diners in the know save room for sweet potato cobbler. The only downside? It's closed on weekends.

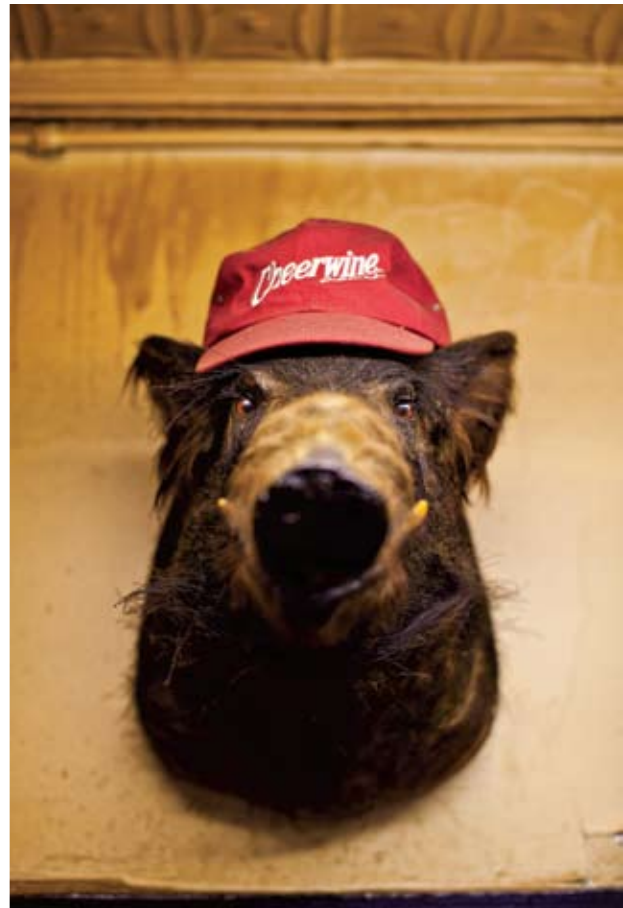
907 Pendleton St.; 864-235-2539

Smokin' Stokes

As at any self-respecting barbecue joint, there are no paper menus here,

Nice Hat

Top, left to right: A pig on the wall at Smokin' Stokes; Community Tap owners Ed Buffington and Mike Okupinski; barbecue and sides at Smokin' Stokes.



just chalkboards above the cash register. Though the original owners sold the place a few years back, the legendary Cheerwine BBQ sauce remains. You can't go wrong with the pork platter, but the barbecue-smothered spuds are like a whole new food group. **1622 Augusta St.; smokinstitokesbbq.com**

Soby's

When Carl Sobocinski opened his eatery in 1997 in a onetime shoe store, nobody gave it much of a shot. Main Street was still more drive-through than destination. But residents have since learned not to underestimate Sobocinski, who now has a stake in five area restaurants, and Soby's has become the nexus of Greenville's burgeoning food scene. Chef Shaun Garcia serves contemporary Southern cuisine, such as his spicy New Orleans-meets-Charleston version of shrimp and grits, and the buttermilk drop biscuits are downright addictive. **207 S. Main St.; sobys.com**

Local Flavors

Bottom, left to right: Rabbit at American Grocery; the well-stocked bar at Soby's; the Southern-inspired Pig on the Porch at American Grocery, with bacon-infused bourbon and a homemade pork rind.

Drink

Addy's Dutch Café

If you're after a quiet spot to enjoy drinks with friends, you can't do better than Addy's. Amsterdam native Addy Sulley serves stout foreign brews and flavorful Dutch fare at his laid-back bar and restaurant off Main. House specials include Wednesday-night schnitzel and way-better-than-it-sounds mustard soup. **17 E. Coffee St; 864-232-2339**

Smiley's Acoustic Café

At this West End watering hole, you can find everyone from college students to the doctor-lawyer set enjoying nightly live shows, which offer plenty of good bluegrass, jazz, and blues. Stop in on a Thursday night for one of Smiley's parking-lot pig pickin's. **111 Augusta St.; smileysacousticcafe.com**

Trappe Door

Australian snowboarder turned Greenville restaurateur Josh Beeby opened this Belgian-inspired pub in the basement under his first venture, **Barley's Taproom & Pizzeria**. Exposed-wood ceilings, warm red walls, and comfortable booths invite patrons to linger over classic *moules frites* and a pint (or two) of roughly 160 different Belgian brews. If you're feeling adventurous, try a sour lambic from the Brussels-based brewery Cantillon. **23 W. Washington St.; trappedoor.com**

Sleep

Hampton Inn & Suites at RiverPlace

The boutique hotel craze has yet to hit Greenville, but the Hampton Inn makes a more-than-adequate substitute, with comfortably appointed rooms and a friendly staff, and it's an easy walk from downtown attractions. Request a studio suite with a balcony for killer views of the Reedy River. **171 RiverPlace; hamptoninnandsuitesgreenville.com**

HOT SPOTS *cont.*
GREENVILLE, SC

Westin Poinsett

For years, the Upstate's only four-diamond hotel sat vacant. But it reopened in 2000 following a multimillion-dollar face-lift that restored it to its 1920s grandeur, right down to the ornate ballrooms and marbled lobby. Years later, it played host to then-candidate Barack Obama. **120 S. Main St.; starwoodhotels.com**

Shop

The Community Tap

Greenville transplants Ed Buffington and Mike Okupinski were just a couple of enthusiastic beer drinkers before chucking their nine-to-fives to open this boutique beer and wine emporium. Although their initial focus was American craft beer (they carry more than 300 labels), after a visit from California vintner Dan Donahoe, the duo became unlikely national trendsetters with the first retail space in the country to offer wine by the growler. **205 Wade Hampton Blvd.; thecommunitytap.com**

Horizon Records

Say you're looking for "Cissy Strut" by the iconic New Orleans funk band the Meters on vinyl. Chances are Gene Berger has it. Berger opened his independent record shop in 1975, and even in the era of digital music he has managed to thrive, thanks to a carefully curated inventory and the kind of personal attention you don't find on iTunes. There's even a classical room, and for serious crate diggers, the Vinyl Vault (housed in unused office space) is the place to uncover all kinds of obscure gems. **2A W. Stone Ave.; store.horizonrecords.net**

Knack

Littered with paint cans, sanding blocks, brushes, bits of hardware,



and colorful furniture in various stages of completion, Barb Blair's design studio has orders pouring in from across the country. Blair rescues furniture destined for the trash heap and gives the vintage pieces sleek modern makeovers. Schedule an appointment to commission a custom creation, or browse her inventory locally at **Antiques on Augusta. 1288 Pendleton St.; knackstudios.com**

Pedal Chic

Greenville is known as a bicycling town (it's home to the USA Cycling Pro Championships), so no surprise it has more than a few great bike shops. But Pedal Chic is the only female-focused bike boutique in the Southeast. Owner Robin Bylenga stocks athletic apparel you won't find in big-box stores and high-end bicycle brands like the Britain-based Pashley—the Bentley of bikes. And yes, she's got models for guys, too. **651B S. Main St.; pedalchic.com**

Listening Posts
Top, left to right:
Horizon Records
keeps it old-school;
live music is always on
tap at the Handlebar.
Bottom, left to right:
Fresh Saturday Market
beets; Pedal Chic
founder and owner
Robin Bylenga; ties at
Rush Wilson.



Pendleton Street Arts District

A relic from the city's textile past, this four-block district in West Greenville was once a crumbling mill village. It's now home to more than thirty local artists and a slew of galleries. Sculptors, painters, photographers, and potters fill formerly vacant storefronts, where you can pick up everything from wearable works of art from **Lily Pottery** (think one-of-a-kind ceramic rings, pendants, and earrings) to vivid acrylics by painter **Dabney Mahanes**. **pendletonstreetartsdistrict.com**

Rush Wilson Ltd.

This family-run menswear shop has outfitted four generations of well-dressed Greenville businessmen, and its old-school customer service hasn't changed a lick. The shop still does in-home and in-office fittings for custom suits and shirts, and stocks local brands like Southern Tide and F. A. MacCluer, the 155-year-old shirt company head-

quartered in nearby Belton.

23 W. North St.; rushwilson.com

Saturday Market

From May through October, neat rows of white tents overflowing with seasonal bounty line Main Street on Saturday mornings. Devotees arrive early to ensure their favorite vendors don't sell out. But the market is more than a one-stop shop for farm-fresh fruits and veggies. Shoppers swap recipes, exchange gardening tips, and take in cooking demos by local chefs. **saturdaymarketlive.com**

See & Do

BMW Performance Driving School

This isn't some glorified car lot. At BMW's North American manufacturing headquarters, just outside Greenville, you can channel your inner NASCAR driver and hit the track. Learn to slalom, drift, and

brake from racing pros, and you don't even have to own a BMW to sign up. Did we mention you get to drive really fast? **1155 Hwy. 101 S., Greer; bmwusa.com**

Bob Jones University Museum & Gallery

A small fundamentalist Christian university in the foothills of South Carolina may not exactly be where you'd expect to find one of the country's preeminent collections of European Old Master paintings. But from the late 1940s to the early '80s, the museum's founder, Bob Jones, Jr., traveled the globe amassing a collection of more than 400 works by artists such as Rubens, Botticelli, and Tintoretto. **1700 Wade Hampton Blvd.; bjumg.org**

Falls Park on the Reedy River

Not many cities can claim a natural fifty-foot waterfall smack in the middle of downtown, but less than a decade ago many residents didn't even know it existed. A push to

remove the eyesore of a bridge that obscured the falls and clean up the surrounding green space became a symbol for downtown Greenville's revival. Today, the resulting park is an outdoor gym, a picnic spot, an open-air performance venue, an art studio, and a point of pride for locals. Stroll the new Liberty Bridge, the only single-suspension bridge in the United States, for unbeatable views of the falls. **601 S. Main St.; fallspark.com**

The Handlebar

Musically, Greenville has a way to go before rivaling nearby meccas Athens and Asheville, but you wouldn't know it at the Handlebar. Housed in a revamped auto-body shop on the edge of downtown, the intimate venue has developed a reputation as an incubator for bands on the brink. National acts such as Sugarland and the Zac Brown Band played here just before making it big. **304 E. Stone Ave.; handlebar-online.com**

The Peace Center

Since its first curtain call in 1990, the Peace Center has anchored downtown's revitalization. The theater regularly pulls in first-run Broadway shows, and as a testament to Greenville's dynamic arts community, programmers aren't afraid to take a few risks. Last year, the controversial coming-of-age musical *Spring Awakening* debuted to a packed house. **300 S. Main St.; peacecenter.org**

Swamp Rabbit Tram Trail

Get outside and experience Greenville like a native—on a bike. The Swamp Rabbit is a brand-new 13.5-mile biking/walking trail that follows the Reedy River from downtown to Travelers Rest. The terrain is fairly mild, but newbies can check out **Reedy Rides** for guided tours. At the end of the trail, refuel and talk shop with other bikers on the deck at the **Café @ Williams Hardware Store. greenvillerec.com/parks/swamp-rabbit**



Lily Wikoff
DESIGN STAR

Twenty-seven-year-old potter and jewelry designer Lily Wikoff expected to spend just four short years in Greenville, getting her degree in studio art at Bob Jones University before heading to New York, where she had the occasional modeling gig. But sometimes smaller really is better. “I just love this city,” Wikoff says. “It’s a smaller city, but it’s such a melting pot. I’ve been able to surround myself with so many other creative types.” From her Pendleton Street studio, **Lily Pottery**, Wikoff crafts ceramic jewelry painted in vibrant hues and stamped with her intricate organic designs. But it’s her housewares that have lately caught the eye of national purveyors. She’s in talks with the Urban



Outfitters-owned Terrain and with home-goods company Shabby Chic to create outdoor and home lines. “I could not have made all this happen as quickly in another city,” Wikoff says. “The support in Greenville is just amazing.”

Group *de* Ville

Five residents turning this former mill town into a hotbed of Southern culture

by ELIZABETH HUTCHISON



Joe and Darlene Clarke

FARMERS' FRIENDS

Though husband and wife Joe and Darlene Clarke struck out for Hollywood and careers in the movie biz, they could not shake their early passions for food and wine, or their love of the South. So the pair eventually left California behind to follow their dream of owning a restaurant. “We had always planned on moving back to the South, but Greenville wasn’t even on the radar,” Joe says. After culinary school for Joe and sommelier certi-

fication for Darlene, a fortuitously timed visit to Darlene’s parents landed the couple in the emergent West End neighborhood, where in 2007 they opened **American Grocery Restaurant**. “We were able to find an old building with good bones,” Joe says. “It just seemed right.” American Grocery became the city’s first dedicated farm-to-table restaurant, and it continues to lead the way in highlighting the region’s bounty.



Diane Kilgore Condon

ART VISIONARY

Leave it to an artist to see the beauty in a crumbling, century-old, ten-thousand-square-foot former general store on “the wrong side of the tracks.” When a friend sneaked painter Diane Kilgore Condon inside the West Greenville building (hoping it wasn’t trespassing, since the door was kicked in), she knew she had found the space she was searching for. “Our original goal with the **Art Bomb Studios** was simple,” she says, “to provide affordable studio space for anyone who was really serious about creating great work.” A decade later, the nonprofit Art Bomb is home to fifteen artists—metalsmiths, potters, painters, and printmakers—and has been a keystone for West Greenville’s transformation from an abandoned mill village to a thriving artists’ colony chock-full of galleries and studios. “Looking back, I have no idea how it came together,” Kilgore Condon says. “But at the time it made perfect sense.”



Edwin McCain

HOMETOWN VOICE

Never completely comfortable in the high-profile music world that accompanied his late-’90s breakout (spawned by the megahit “I’ll Be”), singer/songwriter Edwin McCain chose to remain in his native Greenville over the big-city lights. “I was really impressed with how much the city was changing,” he says. “When I was in high school, the rule was I could have the keys to the car, but I better not go downtown. Now downtown has just exploded.” And McCain has done his part to help it along. In 2006, he co-founded the annual **Euphoria** festival (this year September 22–25), a celebration of food, wine, and music that underscores the depth and breadth of the city’s revitalization. McCain puts on an outdoor concert in downtown’s revamped riverside amphitheater, and venues that once sat boarded up now host chef’s dinners and wine pairings. “Being home where everyone knows me for me,” he says, “that’s where I want to be.”